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The Honorable Jeff Miller of the First District of Florida
Washington, Wednesday, November 12, 2014

RECOGNIZING THE DEDICATION AND HONORABLE SERVICE OF CAPTAIN ROBERT “BOB” RASMUSSEN, USN (RET.)

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize retired Navy Captain Robert “Bob” Rasmussen for his lifetime of honorable service and dedication to our great Nation on the occasion of his retirement as Director of the National Naval Aviation Museum aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola.

A native of Sacramento, California, Bob was born on May 26, 1930, and entered the Navy through the Naval Aviation Cadet Program in 1951. He excelled in flight training school at NAS Whiting Field and NAS Pensacola, both located in Northwest Florida, and was assigned to a fighter squadron in San Diego, California, where he deployed on multiple occasions to the Western Pacific aboard the carrier USS PHILIPPINE SEA. In 1956, he was selected to join the elite Navy Flight Demonstration Team, the Blue Angels, home-based in Pensacola. For three years, he awed and inspired millions of Americans flying flight demonstrations as the right wing pilot and number four slot, including one in particular—a local Pensacola native, Phyllis, who he married on July 27, 1960 at the First Presbyterian Church in Pensacola.

Bob then continued his tours at sea in Fighter Squadron 33 aboard the USS INTREPID and as a Flag Lieutenant to Deputy Commander Atlantic Fleet before completing the Navy Postgraduate School program in Monterey, California. In 1966, he was assigned to Fighter Squadron 111 aboard the USS ORISKANY, where he completed two combat tours in Vietnam and served as first Executive Officer and then Commanding Officer. Before returning to combat in Vietnam as the prospective Air Wing SIXTEEN Commander, subsequently selected for Captain and assigned as Chief of Staff and Operations Officer of Carrier Division SEVEN and then as Commanding Officer of the ammunition ship USS MOUNT HOOD, Bob completed a tour in our Nation’s capital region.

After the end of the war, he served as Commanding Officer of Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Puerto Rico before later returning to Washington to command the Aviation Officer Distribution Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Following three decades of service as one of the finest Naval aviators in history, recording 650 carrier traps and with more than 5,000 flight hours logged, as many servicemembers do, Bob found his way back to Pensacola where he completed his Naval service in 1983 as the Commanding Officer of the Naval Aviation Schools Command. Throughout his prestigious career, he received many awards, including three Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Bronze Star.

Bob’s love for aviation, however, remained, and his artistic prowess proved too strong, as he went on to serve as the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation Director of Development for four years before becoming Director of the National Naval Aviation Museum in 1987. During his tenure there, he produced hundreds of naval aviation water color pieces and several bronze sculpture works for the Museum, the Foundation, and several other historic venues, earning him the R.G. Smith Award for excellence in naval aviation art. As a direct result of his efforts, the Naval Aviation Museum more than tripled in size and remains the most successful Naval museum in the country as close to one million people visit and enjoy the museum each year.

My wife Vicki and I join Northwest Florida—and a grateful Nation—in thanking Captain Bob Rasmussen for his more than six decades of admirable military and public service and wish him all the best as he takes off in his retirement alongside his wife of 54 years, Phyllis; their children, Kathryn and Eric; and grandchildren, Christopher, Ashton, Emily Page, Madison, Avery, and Jack.